

Government to build new dam in Agoro to address water crisis

BY JAMES OWICH

The government, through the Ministry of Water and Environment, is conducting a feasibility study at the Agoro Irrigation Scheme to explore the possibility of constructing a new water reservoir to address the rising demands for water for irrigation.

The rising demand for water for farming is being fuelled by high temperatures as a result of climate change. According to farmers, the demand for water for production has increased by 15 percent in the last decade.

About 147 farmers are operating

at Agoro Irrigation Scheme in Agoro Sub-County in Agoro District, on 1,650 acres of land.

The current reservoir has a capacity of 150 million cubic litres of water. The reservoir is fed by the Okura River, which flows from the Agoro Hills.

The irrigation scheme was established in the 1950s, before it was upgraded in the 1970s. It is currently under rehabilitation after government invested Shs2.5 billion to improve the capacity of the reservoir and tertiary canals.

Mr Charles Bwire, a senior engineer at the Water for Production Regional Cen-

tre North, said the new reservoir will be constructed upstream once the feasibility study is concluded.

"Human activities around River Okura are causing silting of the reservoir. The ministry is working towards building another water reservoir," he said.

He, however, did not state when the actual construction will begin, but added that once funds are available, the project will kick off.

Mr James Okot, the chairperson of Agoro Irrigation Self-Help Company, said people have failed to engage in farming throughout the year, because of the low capacity of the reservoir.

"Water is not enough for farmers. That is why our produce stores are empty. This has been a recurrent problem since 2016," Okot said.

Ms Florence Angee, another farmer, said the current reservoir only serves blocks 1 and 2, leaving seven other blocks without water.

Mr Denis Ocan, a rice farmer, said building a reservoir upstream will solve the long-standing problem of water shortage.

Mr Ocan said for a long time, they have appealed to the ministry to construct more reservoirs to meet the rising demands for water.

"We are growing a variety of crops here. And these crops need water. The existing reservoir always runs out of water," he added.

Since 2016, the government has invested up to Shs31 billion to improve commercial agriculture at the Agoro Irrigation Scheme.

Farmers, however, said the investment has not resulted in tangible benefits since the rehabilitation works have not improved the situation at the scheme.

They alleged that water has not been reaching their fields to enable them to farm throughout the year.